

Hints for Success

by CSM William J. Gainey, Command Sergeant Major, U.S. Army Armor Center

Greetings from the U.S. Army Armor Center and Fort Knox. I would like to remind you that your input field is very important.

The Armor Conference in May was a very successful event and we, as a collective group, accomplished a lot.

I had a great visit with the NCOs from the National Training Center (NTC) and would like to thank CSM Flood from the 11th ACR for hosting our team. I also went to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, and visited with the great National Guard soldiers of the 155th Separate Armor Brigade (E) during their annual training. COL Wood and CSM Booker, your soldiers were looking great and training hard; thanks for hosting us.

I would like to give loud and sincere congratulations to the new master sergeant selectees. Fort Knox did very well on promotions to master sergeant. That may mean that Fort Knox is the place to be if you want to be promoted. The reality is that the promotion board selects sergeants first class for promotion based largely on their success as platoon sergeants at other installations.

As a sergeant first class, platoon sergeant duty is the most critical element of branch certification. The Armor Center's guidance to the board was to select only branch-certified sergeants first

class. To be branch certified, you must have a minimum of 18 months in a branch certifying platoon sergeant position.

Not every platoon sergeant position is a branch-qualifying position. Branch-qualifying positions are in the divisions and regiments, with a very small number at Fort Knox. These positions are branch-certifying positions not because of soldier or equipment assets, but because the platoon sergeant is responsible for training tank commanders and platoon leaders. Platoon sergeants must display master warfighting skills. The U.S. Army is in the warfighting business and requires warfighters as its leaders. Warfighting is not an amateur's sport. NCOs must be the professional technical experts, which is attained through experience.

Highly successful platoon sergeants are the NCOs that the armor force wants for its future first sergeants. Every sergeant first class selected for promotion had more than the minimum 18-month platoon sergeant time requirement. All candidates had some platoon sergeant time in an MTOE unit; none of them had only TDA platoon sergeant time. Many of the sergeants first class selected were serving as first sergeants in MTOE units. To be promoted, you must seek out demanding leadership positions in a division or regiment and excel in that assignment. Do not try to move out of a leadership position at exactly 18 months.

The promotion board can only select a predetermined number for promotion; therefore, not every branch-certified NCO is selected. The board can only select the very best.

The master sergeant selection board uses the Armor Center's guidance to assist in selecting the very best of many highly qualified candidates. A current copy of the board's guidance is available on the Fort Knox website through the Office of the Chief of Armor.



The promotion board highlighted the Excellence in Armor (EIA) program. Started in 1985, The EIA program facilitates career progression and increases promotion potential by identifying and rewarding the best and brightest armor soldiers. There are now more than 13,000 Active, Inactive, Reserve, and National Guard soldiers enrolled.

The Memorandum of Instruction for the EIA program can be found on the Office of the Chief of Armor website. It details the procedures for enrolling in the program and lists the program's benefits. Soldiers can be nominated for the EIA program as early as One Station Unit Training at Fort Knox or any time during their careers. Soldiers also receive additional training and should be assigned ahead of their peers. Promotable sergeants enrolled in the EIA program can earn 50 additional promotion points by passing the Tank Commander Competency Test – Level II (TCCT-II) or the Scout Commander Competency Test – Level II (SCCT-II). EIA soldiers are also given special consideration for PLDC and BNCOC.

Historically, the majority of soldiers selected for promotion to the top three grades in armor were enrolled in the EIA program. The soldiers in the program have been identified as the best in their units and will be future leaders.

True leaders take care of their soldiers. When we support soldiers and enroll them in the EIA program, we are doing more than just talking about how we take care of soldiers. We are putting words into action.

Always remember, "PRIDE IS CONTAGIOUS."

I am very interested in receiving concerns, comments, and suggestions from soldiers out in the field. Please send all questions and comments to the following email address:

CSM@knox.army.mil

Two or three questions will be selected and featured in each edition of *ARMOR*.